

he said of himself, the Goncourts, and others, that future generations might well find their works difficult to read. Many already find it difficult to read Balzac, though he possessed a gift of humour which was lacking in Zola. On the other hand, Zola's style was generally much superior to Balzac's, though the latter was a good grammarian and could write admirable straightforward French when he pleased, as witness many letters in his "Correspondence." In the case both of Balzac and of Zola some knowledge of French history, politics, manners, and other matters is necessary for a proper understanding of their •works. "Les Rougon-Macquart," like "La Comédie Humaine," can only be fully appreciated by those who are familiar with the period it treats of; and though Zola usually confined himself to the elemental passions which are also the eternal ones, it is perhaps doubtful whether works of fiction which tax the reader's knowledge in many ways can hope for immortality. Yet possibly the Rougon-Macquart series has a better chance of survival than is possessed by some of Zola's other books, whose social influence has been greater. Influence of that kind has certainly been exercised by some of the Rougon-Macquart volumes, though not in the same degree as by such great *machines de guerre* as "Lourdes" and "Rome/" which

reinforced by "Vdrit6" have proved factors of weight in the great struggle between clericalism and free thought in France. As engines of warfare for use in that struggle, they may survive for many years; but the struggle ceasing they would probably be soon forgotten, as is usually the case with books whose purpose is too ostensible. That example will explain the meaning of our remark that the